

Massachusetts when he challenged both the political and religious establishments by asserting that the government had no role in religion. Moreover, he challenged the legitimacy of the colony itself by charging that it had stolen its land from the Indians. So he was tried and convicted of sedition, heresy and the refusal to take an oath of allegiance to the colony that required him to swear in God's name. In October 1635 he was ordered banished to England, whence he had fled in 1630 because of religious persecution.

Before the banishment could be carried out, however, he fled from Salem into the snow in January 1636 and trekked to the Narragansett Bay. In June he left the shelter of the Wampanoags and crossed the Seekonk River into the domain of the Narragansetts. From Miantonomi and Canonius he acquired Providence. His relations with the Narragansetts were so cordial that Providence and the Narragansetts remained allies for the next 40 years against the efforts of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Plymouth colonies to destroy them both.

When the householders first gathered in Providence to form their town government, they agreed that they could make rules and laws in "civil matters only." In 1644 when Williams secured his charter for the "Province of Providence Plantations in Narragansett Bay in New England," that charter was for a "civil government." It did not mention religion because Williams did not believe that government had any role to play in religion. "Soul liberty" was God's gift to all humanity; it was not something granted by any government.

Soul liberty was the freedom of every person to follow the dictates of conscience. A government could only acknowledge this freedom and stand aside to allow full freedom of religion. This meant that one had to have complete separation of church and state. For Roger Williams, separation of church and state was for the protection of the church from the corrupting effects of government. Williams wrote repeatedly that true religion needs no support of the government and that government support invariably corrupts religion.

All of the neighboring colonies regarded Providence Plantations with undisguised horror and worked for the first hundred years to dismember and destroy this "hive of heretics." But they failed, and the principle that Roger Williams planted in Providence in 1636 came to be the law of all of Rhode Island and then a basic principle of the United States. And, Roger Williams, whose ideas were roundly rejected by everybody in his lifetime, would be seen by the 20th Century as the quintessential American of the 17th Century. What was the founding principle of Providence—freedom of religion (which demands separation of church and state)—now holds out a hope for the whole world where religious intolerance is the basis of so much strife.

Williams believed that it was God's command that everyone (including people that he regarded as heretics, pagans, atheists, and infidels) had a right to freedom of conscience. He believed that anyone had a right to be wrong, and that only civil debate could be used to change a heart or mind. The only tools of religion were those of the spirit, never the sword. For him, the state had no role to play in religion. He believed that whenever and wherever the government tried to meddle with religion by trying to define it or control it or enforce it, or even to support it, religion was corrupted by such efforts.

Williams and his good friend John Clarke, of Newport, shared the view that the key to a peaceful society was complete separation of church and state. Nearly everyone else believed just the opposite: They believed that

peace was possible only when everyone was united in a single church in a single state. Williams's core religious principle held that each person had freedom of conscience and freedom to practice their faith. Nearly everyone else thought that the state had to punish and coerce those who had divergent religious beliefs, wrong practices, or wayward ideas.

His position on freedom of religion was wildly radical in his day and, nearly four centuries later, this basic principle is still wildly radical in great swathes of today's world. Religious freedom does not exist in most nations on the planet.

What would Roger Williams think of the idea that our nation was founded as a Christian nation? Certainly Providence and Rhode Island were not founded as a Christian government. It is deeply troubling to know that a pastor of one of the largest churches in Texas declared on national TV that "separation of church and state is the product of some infidel's mind."

To call Roger Williams an infidel reveals profound ignorance of our nation's history. Roger Williams utterly rejected any such concept and regarded the idea of a "Christian nation" as "blasphemy." So, he established a government that was confined to "civil matters only," and this has become a model for the world.●

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 1326. A bill to implement the President's request to increase the statutory limit on the public debt.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-2370. A communication from the Chief of Planning and Regulatory Affairs, Food and Nutrition Services, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Child and Adult Care Food Program: Improving Management and Program Integrity" (RIN0584-AC24) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2371. A communication from the Chief of Planning and Regulatory Affairs, Food and Nutrition Services, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "National School Lunch Program: School Food Service Account Revenue Amendments Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010" (RIN0584-AE11) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2372. A communication from the Chief of Planning and Regulatory Affairs, Food and Nutrition Services, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): Exclusion of Combat Pay from WIC Income Eligibility Determinations" (RIN0584-AE04) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-2373. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), transmitting the report of an officer

authorized to wear the insignia of the grade of major general in accordance with title 10, United States Code, section 777; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-2374. A communication from the General Counsel of the National Credit Union Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Prompt Corrective Action; Amended Definition of Low-Risk Assets, 76 FR 16234 (March 23, 2011)" (RIN3133-AD81) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-2375. A communication from the General Counsel of the National Credit Union Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Prompt Corrective Action; Amended Definition of Low-Risk Assets, 75 FR 66298 (October 28, 2010)" (RIN3133-AD81) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-2376. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Final Flood Elevation Determinations" ((44 CFR Part 67)(Docket No. FEMA-2011-0002)) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on July 1, 2011; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-2377. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Energy Conservation Program: Certification, Compliance, and Enforcement for Consumer Products and Commercial and Industrial Equipment" (RIN1904-AC23) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on July 1, 2011; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-2378. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Revision of Fee Schedules; Fee Recovery for Fiscal Year 2011" (RIN3150-AI93) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-2379. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Office of Policy, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Regulation to Mitigate the Misfueling of Vehicles and Engines with Gasoline Containing Greater Than Ten Volume Percent Ethanol and Modifications to the Reformulated and Conventional Gasoline Programs" (FRL No. 9428-2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-2380. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Office of Policy, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval and Prolongation of Implementation Plans; State of Oregon; Regional Haze State Implementation Plan and Interstate Transport Plan" (FRL No. 9425-3) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on June 30, 2011; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-2381. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Office of Policy, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Revisions to the California State Implementation Plan, Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District" (FRL No. 9427-9) received in the Office